

STUDENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING AND THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract

Beliefs play an important role in teaching and learning because they can impact on teaching behaviors and direct teachers' decision making about how they will teach in the classroom. Therefore, the researcher attempted to deeply explore students' beliefs about the teaching and the teaching profession which were classified into four aspects: beliefs about teaching methodology, teachers' roles, teachers' challenges, and the teaching profession. The participants were the students who majored in English Literature and they mostly had little teaching experience. The context of exploring the beliefs was in the post-pandemic recovery or when the integration of technology has become the new face of teaching and learning. Through the open questionnaire, it was found that, in the post pandemic era, the teaching methodology should involve offline, online, and blended learning. Second, the roles of teachers were more likely to be facilitators and motivators. Third, the major challenge was in the use of technology itself, and the teaching professions could be a potential and promising career and a profession which contested plenty of obstacles.

Keywords: Beliefs; Teaching Profession; Post Pandemic Era

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously affected not only to the population but also to the education system at all levels. During the pandemic situation, the learning system was switched from face-to-face learning to online learning. Its suddenness caused many teachers confronted with going online due to their inability to that new environment such as technological resources and how to work with them (Vulpe & Pribac, 2021). Nevertheless, the term "online learning" or "distance learning" has taken root to become a pivotal part in education which brings a new face in education and gained its popularity since the COVID-19 outbreak (Alcontin, 2021). Thus, this learning is defined as the important method in education which has developed significantly around the world now (Zhou et al., 2020). Proven to be the strategic and practical approach to teach in distance learning (Ivone et al., 2020), even though the government has allowed schools to conduct face-to-face learning in the post-pandemic era, some are still adopting online learning for various reasons. The School of Foreign Languages JIA or STBA JIA, a higher education situated in Bekasi, Indonesia, has opened an online program considering the high interest of students in the virtual learning. There are also many other universities offer online learning in their current curriculum in Indonesia. This proves the COVID-19 crisis has not only driven a massive shift away from traditional learning with physical interactions, which forced teachers to draw on their professional knowledge and ability to make use of technological resources and creativity, but also introduced new habits and adaptations in teaching and learning virtually. Therefore, exploring whether the new face of teaching and learning in the post pandemic era has successfully raised students' interests to embark a career in teaching in the future and their perceptions on the teaching practices became the main concern in this study.

The study program English literature at STBA JIA provides students a comprehensive foundation in English literature, linguistics, and language skills. When they graduate, they are prepared for variety of careers such as business, industry, tourism, government, education, etc. In addition to teach the students with the English literatures, linguistics, and language skills, STBA JIA also points out the importance of pedagogical skills for the students which is why Teaching Methodology is given as one of the compulsory courses in semester five. The course mainly discusses the approaches, methods, and principles of language teaching and learning. It also enables students to learn how to prepare and plan lessons for teaching. The contexts aforementioned have also triggered the researcher's curiosity to see more comprehensively their beliefs about the teaching and the teaching profession in the future. Apart from the demands to have professional knowledge in language and teaching in the post-pandemic recovery, the relatively small amount of teaching fees for honorary teachers, and the government's decision to change the status of PNS (civil servants) to PPK (Contract-based Government Employees) for non-tenured teachers who pass the selection exam may affect their perceptions of the teaching profession. Similarly, the media exposures related to teachers who experienced considerable threats and intimidation from students, students' parents, and society may also inhibit their interest to teach (Arifin, 2020). In addition to it, their learning experiences with their teachers in the past can shape their perspectives. Thus, the context within which the teaching is practiced and their minimum knowledge about the approaches, methods, principles of teaching and learning bring a huge impact on constructing their beliefs. In response, the researcher intended to shed some light on their beliefs about the teaching practices and how they, the students of STBA JIA, view about the teaching profession after they learned the Teaching Methodology.

Research concentrating on the areas of beliefs in teaching practices and the teaching profession have been studied with various results. Nzizeyimana & Osman (2013) conducted research with first-year students at KIE Rwanda in order to explore their beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession in developing countries. The results suggested that the nature of beliefs relied on the students' prior knowledge, their learning experiences, and the context of the teaching practices. Through semi-structured interviews, they found some students who fitted well in the career, were against the profession, and were not interested but showed strong commitment. While using a narrative interview, Kutálková (2017) interviewed Petr, a 24-years-old student majoring in Special Education in Czech Republic, about his beliefs on the teaching practices. The main objectives of the research were to explore the motivation for study, for being a teacher, and the key factors involved. The conclusion drawing from her research was that the students majoring in Faculty of Education did not necessarily mean they were motivated to become a teacher in the future. In Indonesia, (Kandilla et al., (2018) investigated a student teacher's beliefs on pedagogical knowledge based on her experiences in pre-service teaching program. Surprisingly, the student's beliefs changed after the training program, for instance, building more confidence to be a teacher.

Despite the enormous studies on students' beliefs about teaching and the teaching practices, students' beliefs in the post-pandemic recovery in the context of higher education level in Indonesia still remains unexplored. Furthermore, the beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession from the students whose major is not from English language education can be an interesting issue and a novelty to explore. Therefore, the present study aimed to explore the students' beliefs about teaching and the teaching profession in the post-pandemic recovery. Specifically, this research was intended to describe students' perceptions on the teaching practices, teaching profession, teacher's roles, and the challenges of teaching.

Beliefs can be considered as ideas that individuals assume as being correct. Fives & Buehl (2012, cited in Davison et al., (2020) contend that beliefs are subjective claims that individuals accept as true. Similarly Borg (2001) says that it is a mental state that is regarded as true by

individuals and it guides how they think and act. So, it connects to thoughts and behaviors. Thus, beliefs make an impact on how we see the world because they are linked to the value and our understanding. The concepts of beliefs and knowledge are inseparable which can create confusion. Pajares (1992) differs the two concepts by categorizing that knowledge can be equated with factual information and shared, while beliefs can be contested. In addition, Nespor (1987) adds that knowledge is conscious and can change, while beliefs are held unconsciously and resistant to change. With regard to these concepts, beliefs guide how people think and act in life, and it does not need a truth condition.

Studying the sources of beliefs are of paramount importance as they may influence on whether or not the beliefs change and develop over time. The sources of beliefs are explained in various ways. Richardson (1996) categorizes three sources of beliefs which include personal experiences, experiences with schooling and instructions, and experiences with formal knowledge. Personal experiences include aspects of life dealing with the formation of world view, intellectual dispositions, beliefs about oneself, and understandings which include the understandings of the relationships between schools and society and personal, familiar, and cultural understandings. That is to say, an approach for the teachers' pedagogic teaching is influenced by their personal experiences. While, the beliefs about experiences with schooling and instructions may come from observing teachers in schools. Richardson believes that students observe the teaching models at schools and it can create a deep-seated belief about their own teaching practices. And, the experiences with formal knowledge is the experience which is acquired from learning subject matters at school, studying, reading, or attending Sunday school classes. So, the source of their beliefs come from the conceptions of the subject matter students learn, the learning method, and the pedagogical experiences.

In addition to Richardson, Buehl & Fives (2009, pp.382 – 383) divide the beliefs about the source of knowledge for teaching into several categories which are formal preparation (this external source comes from college course work, professional workshops, conferences, and content area classes), formal bodies of information (the source is attained from books, literatures, research articles, etc.), observational or vicarious learning (the source of knowledge by observing others teach whether the teaching is done well or poorly), interactions or collaboration (this source is derived from sharing, collaboration, discussion, and support. The interactions or collaboration can come from experts, parents, peers, colleagues, etc.), enactive experiences (this source is from the personal and life experiences form through how an individual lives, learn at school, spend their time at school, etc.), self-reflection (this is the source in which an individual obtains from self-awareness and the process of knowing oneself). Other scholars such as Kindsvatter, et.al., (1988, cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017) also classify the sources into four which are teachers' experiences as language learners, experience from teaching, teachers' personalities, and education-based or research-based principles. Besides, Kennedy (1997) also states that educational product, personal experiences, and the results of the socialization process might be regarded as the sources of beliefs (cited in Xu, 2012). As can be seen from the explanation above, various sources were stated by the different scholars, and some of the sources indicate similar points in terms of personal experience and learning experiences.

The era of technology has created new needs in education, and therefore, teachers are required to be able to learn new skills to meet the needs and face the radical changes. Scardamalia et al., (2012) enlist skills which are required in the 21st skills such as creativity and innovation, communication, collaboration/teamwork, information literacy/research, critical thinking, problem solving and decision making, citizenship – local and global, ICT literacy, life and career skills, learning to learn/metacognition, personal and social responsibility. Teachers in the 21st century must accept the fact that they have to have digital literacy and prepare for growth. In other words, the digital age focuses on the adaptation to new technologies which are

now integrated in the classroom teaching, for example, being able to utilize the latest trends such as mobile learning blogs, emails, online quizzes, instant messenger, and video conference (Sarica & Cavus, 2009). Regarding these new roles, Amin, (2016) noted some important points:

- a. Teachers must have the competency in differentiating between “learning about” and “learning to be”. In the digital era, teachers should accommodate learners for the content exploration to learn the materials digitally and the role of teachers from technical to teaching point is important.
- b. Teachers must be willing to develop skills and provide support to create interactive learning, collaborative learning, and independent learning among the students. In this context, teachers should “nurture critical thinking, creativity and scientific temper among the students to transform them into life-long learners and innovators” (p.43).
- c. Teachers must be able to use technologies and facilities for effective teaching such as knowing how to use e-learning, virtual platforms, social media, etc.
- d. Teachers must be digital native who can promote critical thinking, creativity, and scientific temper. Teachers should be able to help learners gain the advanced level of knowledge and skills.

It can be concluded that, the main role of teachers has changed due to the advancement of technology, that is to utilize technology in their teaching and collaborate with the students. Not only this, teachers must design activities that enable students to be critical and creative, so teaching is not only about listening to their teachers explaining the lessons.

Numerous studies have reported the challenges of teaching in English classroom. Emery (2012) reports on the teaching challenge regarding the physical condition such as large or overcrowded classes. Besides the class size issues, Nunan (2003) summarizes that inadequate trained and skilled teachers can be the teachers’ hurdle. This hurdle is bigger especially for teachers in rural areas (Binod, 2015). It marks the importance of teachers’ development and persistence to keep learning especially in the 21st century which requires teachers to develop their skills. But sometimes, the cumbersome tasks and the little chance that teachers have to access the training programs becomes the problem of their professional development. With that being said, the support from school is crucial to improve teachers’ skills as they cannot work alone.

Not to mention, the shift of teaching demands teachers to upgrade their pedagogical skills. Teachers cannot teach with a single method, for example, Grammar Translation method in their class. Instead, they have to vary their method to meet the students’ needs for instance, adopting the CLT approach to cater their needs in improving their language proficiency. That is to say, pedagogy is regarded as the key role of teaching. Nevertheless, this condition can also be an issue for teachers because they have little knowledge of pedagogy. Ansari (2012) stipulates that having little knowledge of teaching methods cause their teaching deficiency. Gaining the knowledge of how to teach can be obtained from reading, attending seminars or workshops, training, carrying out research, etc.

Another challenge in teaching is the confidence to create communicative classroom environments. Following the framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), teachers have to provide activities which enable students to use the language communicatively. Not only can it be the challenge for students which might view it as a difficult class, but also teachers. Littlewood (2007) claims teachers’ language proficiency is the factor that makes them unconfident to engage in communication. Then, improving language proficiency for foreign language teachers is also a must. In line with this, Khan (2011) also reports that in EFL countries with little exposure to English, teaching English can be a difficult task to undertake. Encouraging students to use English confidently is hard in the EFL contexts.

The challenge revealed by Garton et al., (2011) is teaching mixed level classes. It is the class where students with beginning, intermediate, and advanced English level are mixed in one class. The challenge is not only about designing lessons which can meet their students’ needs, but

also how to manage the class, choose a teaching method, create a project, and discipline them. Consequently, teachers must be able to structure the class in ways that the students can learn regardless their current level and having clear regulations which have been communicated by the class to discipline them. Furthermore, Garton et al., mention that limited resources of accessibility as one of the issues in teaching. Indeed, resources are salient components in teaching which provide guideline and directions. In many institutions, teachers are expected to accept the books provided without having the chance to evaluate.

Faced with the various challenges in teaching, the solutions which can be offered to overcome are better access to resources such as textbooks and materials, better access to new technologies, training in new language teaching methodologies, improving English language proficiency, and smaller classes (Garton et al., 2011).

METHOD

This research focused on gathering students’ beliefs about teaching practices and the teaching profession in the post pandemic era, so the qualitative approach was applied. According to Lodico et al., (2010), the research dealing with participants in naturalistic settings in order to explore the meanings and understanding of their experience is regarded as the qualitative research. Similarly, Lichthman (2006) connotes that words are used to describe and interpret the data in qualitative research. So, the results of the research were comprehensively reported through texts. Unlike the quantitative research, it summarizes the findings numerically and is frequently considered as experimental research which attempts to investigate cause and effect relationships (Lodico et al., 2010). The qualitative research works inductively, where it starts from building patterns to construct comprehensive themes, while, in contrast, the quantitative refers to the deductive reasoning in which an existing theory-driven hypothesis guides how the data are collected and analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As such, the beliefs which are the patterns were carefully analyzed to find how the participants held about teaching practices and the teaching profession in the post pandemic era. The participants involved were the students who have taken Teaching Methodology course in semester five consisting of 26 students which were the combination of morning and evening classes. They were the students of English literature study program and some of them had teaching experience as private English teachers. Therefore, the researchers divided the participants according to their teaching experience and willingness to teach in the future. They were selected purposively who had key knowledge about the information related to the research. So, it is regarded as a purposive sampling, the sampling method which selects the proficient and well-informed individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

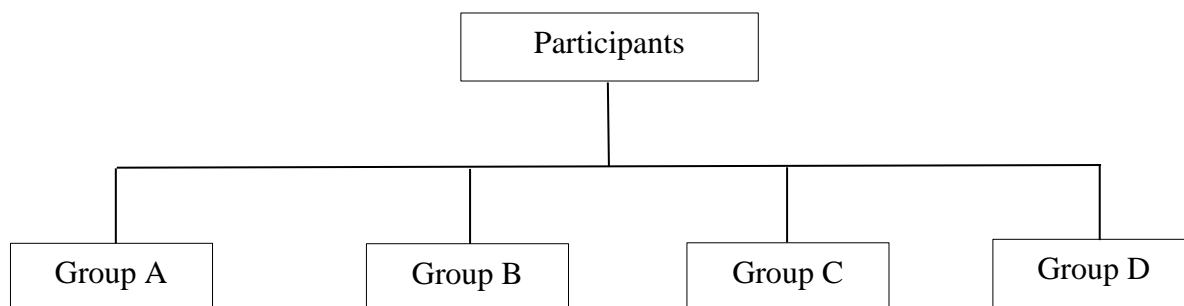


Figure 1. The distribution of the participants

Group A consisted of the participants (A1 – A2) who had teaching experience as private English teachers and wanted to embark a career in teaching. There were two participants in this group. Yet, it was recorded that there were four participants (B1 – B4), in Group B, who had teaching experience, and but they did not want to want to teach. While in Group C, the participants (C1 – C6) had no teaching experience, but were interested in teaching English in the future (6 participants). In contrast, the last group (Group D) comprised 14 participants (D1 – D14) who neither had teaching experience nor intended to teach in the future.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Students' beliefs about the teaching methodology in the post pandemic era
 - a. Group A: there were two students in this group (A1 and A2). A1 believed it was the communicative approach which was the relevant method in the post pandemic era, and A2 emphasized more on the development of online learning.
 - b. Group B: Group B consisted of four students (B1, B2, B3, and B4). B1 and B3 agreed on the traditional teaching which was learning in the classroom (offline), even though B3 also realized the importance of blended learning (both offline and online learning). While, B2 and B4 said more about the integration of technology which needed to be developed in the teaching method. B4 gave more comprehensive information by stating the skills which needed to be improved.
 - c. Group C: Based on the responses, C1 said that it was the blended learning which could be the best teaching method. It was supported by C5 who said that it was the distance learning with technology enhanced learning. The rest of the students (C2, C3, C4, and C6) did not really give specific teaching methods.
 - d. Group D: Fourteen students were in this group because they had no experience in teaching, and they did not consider teaching as their career opportunity in the future. Three participants had similar views which were implementing offline learning where teachers and students can have a face-to-face interaction (D1, D3, and D19).
2. Students' beliefs about the teachers' roles in the post pandemic era.
 - a. Group A: For the roles of teacher, A1 believed that teachers should motivate students to engage in offline learning because students might prefer to learn virtually. However, A2 did not give clear reasons for why the roles were important.
 - b. Group B: All participants (B1 – B4) in this group agreed that the role was important in the post pandemic era to assist students accessing information from the internet (B1), to help parents educate their children (B2), and to create a good education system (B4). More specifically, B3 also stated that facilitating the students to support their learning was the major role.
 - c. Group C: Group C gave various roles of teachers in the post pandemic era, for instance, C1 and C5 who believed that the role of teachers was as a facilitator that is to provide support needed by the students. Furthermore, C5 added more roles such as a social connector, a role model, and a source of inspiration. The rest of the students confirmed about the importance of teachers' role in the post pandemic era (C2, C3, and C4). C2 further explained that the role was as the controller that is to control students directly since during the pandemic the teachers could only do it virtually. Nevertheless, C3 and C4 had nothing to say regarding the specific role of teachers in the post pandemic era; and C6 added that instructing students to be better and more creative was the important role.

- d. Group D: The respondents in this group came to an agreement regarding the importance of the teachers' role (D1, D2, D6, D7, D8, D10, D11, D14). For the specific roles, D3 believed that the role was more like a friend and similarly, D5 was the provider of students' support and knowledge. In addition, D8 argued that teachers had a role as a mentor who guided and created an exciting classroom environment. An interesting response was conveyed by D7 who stated that the role has shifted to the new era. D10, D11, D12, and D13 mentioned that the roles were to build qualified human resources, to encourage students, and to support socially, emotionally, and promote leadership. The other respondents (D1, D2, D4, D6, D9, D14) gave general opinions about the teachers' roles in the post pandemic era.
3. Students' beliefs on the challenges in the post pandemic era.
 - a. Group A: in this group, the respondent contended that the challenge was getting the attention from students and making sure the learning happened (A1). Besides, A2 said that the issues pertaining the use of technology such as internet connection and how students understood the lessons were the obstacles.
 - b. Group B: two participants believed that the major challenge in the post pandemic era was the emotional state that is the emotional change from pandemic to post pandemic era (B1 and B4). B2 added that the difficulty could be to avoid boredom in the classroom and made them motivated. And, as in group 1, the participant from group 2 also thought the technology literacy could be the issue.
 - c. Group C: various hurdles were given by the participants in this group. First, it was how to address the gap between pandemic and the post pandemic era in technology, emotional states, assessment and evaluation (C1). Regarding the technology use, C6 argued that the reliance on gadgets could be one of the challenges. Apart from the technology, the teaching methodology was also considered as the challenge (C3). The trauma that the students perceived during the pandemic and the limited social interaction were the other challenges postulated (C4 and C5). The last participant noted the habit that the students built in the online classes gave an impact to offline classes which is laziness (C2).
 - d. Group D: most of the participants in this group agreed that the adaptation from online to offline learning in terms of pedagogy in the digital era was the major challenge (D2, D8, D9, D11, and D14). Supporting this view, D7 believed that with adaptability teachers can solve the teaching problems in the pandemic era. It was not only about adaptation, but also how to build back the students' confidence in the post pandemic era (D1 and D12) and to keep the class focused and well-managed since the online learning had the students depend on gadgets (D3, D5, D6, and D13). The rest of the respondents in this group held a belief that the internet connection and the fatigue of teaching in the post pandemic era were the difficult tasks (D4) and (D10).
 4. Students' beliefs about the teaching profession.
 - a. Group A: Group A had a positive view on the teaching profession. Teaching had potential as a career (A1), yet it was without the obstacles especially in building a relationship with students.
 - b. Group B: B1 and B2 perceived that the teaching profession in the post pandemic era was challenging and hard to do. Meanwhile, B4 realized that even though there was a massive change in teaching after the pandemic, this profession played an important role; nevertheless, B3 did not provide relevant response.
 - c. Group C: Group C described teaching as the profession which was hard and challenging (C1, C3, and C4), but it was definitely important (C5). One

participant viewed that teaching was the profession which required patience and dedication (C2) and C6 lost his interest in teaching.

- d. Group D: similarly, some respondents in Group D agreed on the importance of the teaching profession (D7, D8, D10, and D13) and it did have high responsibilities (D9). Few respondents also contended that teaching was difficult to do (D3, D5, D11, and D12). One respondent provided an interesting response regarding the heavy workload that teachers had (D14). And the remaining respondents expressed their rejection to be a teacher (D1, D2, D4, and D6).

Discussion

Based on the results from groups B, C, and D, the teaching methodology which was suitable in the post pandemic era was the method which integrated the technology use. Similarly, Amin, (2016) mentioned teachers need additional skills to use technologies and facilities for effecting teaching. This shows that teachers must have the skills to use the technology in their teaching. Classrooms settings in offline, online, and blended learning were still considered to be effective. So, not only is the traditional teaching prioritized in the post pandemic era, but also the online and blended learning. Schools and universities may offer modules which are conducted online without losing the learning objectives. In STBA JIA itself, the interest of students in online learning are getting increasing. This is proven by the increasing number of students who registered to online class in the new academic year 2023 – 2024. Additional teaching method was stated by Group A regarding the implementation of communicative approach. Communicative approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is the approach which principally focusses on promoting communication. CLT can be the strategic method in the post pandemic era since communication skills are one of the essential skills in this era.

The roles of teachers were believed to be ones who motivated, facilitated, and mentored the students (Brown & Lee, 2015). Interpreting from the responses of the responses, there were similarities in viewing the role of teachers. Besides mentoring, Group A and D believed that teachers' role was to be able to encourage students in the post pandemic era due to the dramatic changes especially in the learning system. In addition, the respondents from Group B and C held a belief that, after the pandemic, the students had to be facilitated with classroom activities which enabled them to easily access information, support their learning, and address their needs. Brown & Lee, (2015) also classifies that facilitating as one of the roles which can discover languages in a meaningful way. The researcher also believed that in the post pandemic era, the teaching practices must shift from traditional practices which adopt lecturing. In the world of technology, teachers must be able to facilitate the students with the teaching method in a technology-enhanced learning.

All groups confirmed that the post pandemic era is the era of technology, so technology literacy is an inevitable skill. However, reviewing the findings from the questionnaire, the respondents thought this skill was the obstacle. It could be understood because the transformation was very sudden, so many teachers might not prepare to face this. However, the researcher believed that teachers could adapt with this change since the implementation of technology-enhanced learning has equally been applied in English classrooms and there was greater awareness towards this integration of technology in classroom teaching.

There were two categories of beliefs from the respondents regarding the teaching profession. Group A, who had a positive view seeing teaching as the future career, perceived that teaching was the potential future career even though their academic background was not from a language teaching study program. Groups B, C, and D believed that teaching was a challenging and hard practice because there were lots of responsibilities and various roles involved. It shows that there is a correlation between how they perceived teaching as a future career and how they

described the teaching professions. It is not wrong to hold a belief that teaching contests many obstacles and difficulties as noted in the previous section, yet those who have a positive believe in teaching may not point out the challenges of teaching, instead it is the fun things that they remember.

CONCLUSION

Beliefs have a pivotal role in English language teaching because they are the central role which guides how someone makes decisions in terms of their pedagogical practices, behaves, and builds interaction with students. Thus, understanding their beliefs provide important information. This research focuses on describing the beliefs from four different groups (Group A, B, C, and D). These groups differ from their teaching experience and how they perceive about teaching as the future career. Regarding the teaching methodology, in the post pandemic era, the respondents believed that teaching had to be carried out offline, online, and blended learning. In addition to it, the communicative approach was selected to be applied. The second research question focuses on the roles of teachers in the post pandemic era. The roles as a source and a facilitator major were recorded the most by the respondents. While for the challenges, which is the third research question, the respondents revealed that the use of technology was still an issue in the post pandemic era. The last belief studied was the views on the teaching profession. It was found that the participants who had experiences and wanted to teach in the future (Group A) perceived teaching as a career potential, while the remaining groups (Groups B, C, and D) discerned that teaching had obstacles.

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